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**SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.**

“Though faiths pass, though the philosophies of the great become the shuttlecock of little schoolmen, beauty doth reign ever with her old benignity . . . . Do thou but trap her in one tiny ditty, the world in after years shall relearn thy language but to sing it once again.”

ARTHUR MAQUARIS (*The Days of the Magnificent.*)



# SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY POEM

DONE INTO MODERN ENGLISH

BY

KENNETH HARE.



THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD PRESS  
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

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**TO MY WIFE.**

NOTE.

I am anxious to express my indebtedness to my friend Cyril Brett (who supplies the introduction to this translation), for his sympathetic assistance, and for many illuminating notes on knotty points arising out of the dialect in which this excellent old poem is composed.

KENNETH HARE.

## INTRODUCTION.

The Middle English poem which Mr. Hare has here translated was probably written in the dialect of North Lancashire about 1360, by an unknown person, who seems to have written three other poems, now called "Pearl," "Cleanness," and "Patience." Of these, the first, like "Sir Gawayne," combines rime and alliteration; the others are wholly in the alliterative metre familiar from its use in "Piers Plowman." All these pieces are of great merit and interest, but I shall speak henceforth only of "Sir Gawayne."

Gaston Paris called our poem "the jewel of mediæval English literature," and it is certainly the best single poem in that group, not excepting Chaucer's best work. It possesses in a small compass, the varied excellences of Chaucer, with much to which he neither attained, nor perhaps wished to attain.

The alliterative metre is apt to be monotonous in movement, conventional in phrase, rough or grotesque in treatment. It does not readily or convincingly speak the language of chivalry or good breeding, and can only with difficulty be light or humorous. Rugged strength, wealth of homely illustration, and a few rememberable rhythms, we often find, and these are in "Sir Gawayne" and in the other three poems; but in "Sir Gawayne" are many qualities and excellences, which might

well have been thought to be beyond the reach of alliterative verse.

The plot is admirably contrived, its moment of surprise being genuine and introduced with skill, its motivation and moral admirable : no "swevenes," dreams, mediæval discursiveness, or allegory, hinder the progress of the tale or bore the reader. The tale is full of colour, of brightness, of life ; of vigorous and faithful pictures of moor and fell, of winter among them, of the hunting of deer, boar and fox ; of the dress of knight and lady ; of unhurrying yet never tedious description of castle, hall and bower, even to the hassocks, the fire where charcoal burned, the rings on which the curtains hang in Gawayne's bedchamber, the tables and trestles, the white cloths, the silver spoons, the very dishes at meals. Mr. Hare says in a letter to me : "Charles Lamb somewhere regrets that Shakespeare writes so little of the contemporary life of his time, the domestic details. Now this author does this with extraordinary happiness. Lamb would have loved 'Gawayne.'"

The best work in the poem perhaps lies in the wonderful scenes of love between the lady of the castle and Sir Gawayne ; their talk moves easily, naturally, and dramatically, within the alliterative metre, as if conscious of no such bonds ; all is natural, and yet consummately finished and artistic, even to the subtle use of the two forms of

address with the second personal pronoun in middle and early modern English.

But it is time to speak of the rendering before us. "The life-blood of rhymed translation is this, that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one. The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh nation, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty. Poetry not being an exact science literalness of rendering is altogether secondary to this chief aim. I say *literalness* not fidelity, which is by no means the same thing. When literalness can be combined with what is thus the primary condition of success, the translator is fortunate, and must strive his utmost to unite them ; when such object can only be attained by paraphrase, that is his only path." These words of Rossetti may justly be applied to the present version of "Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight." It is not a literal translation,—that would be impossible even in prose, owing to the obscurity or conciseness of some passages and to those untranslatable phrases which always abound in the productions of genius. It is rather a paraphrase ; yet it is a good version,—indeed the best that has yet appeared. The verses here put before the reader are still for the most part poetry, for they have come from an enthusiasm for all beautiful things, especially the beautiful things of earlier English

literature ; and this enthusiasm has been happily joined to a good knowledge of the language and other peculiar difficulties of the poem. I should like to draw attention to the excellent enchantment by which the translator has kept, in a different metre, so much of the charm of movement and music in his original, and in this passage in particular—

“ Then the world’s weather doth with Winter chide,

\* \* \* \*

This biddeth Gawayne mind the hour of his voyage.”

*pp.* 16-17.

This passage I chose because its theme is a conventional one with early French and English poets, yet has nowhere else been treated with like fluency and at the same time with like truth. Moreover, there is greater danger in this, than in most other places of the poem, of the translation becoming monotonous ; and this, I submit, it is very far from doing. I take leave then of my friend’s rendering with a cordial recommendation of it, to scholars, for its beauty and accuracy,—in the sense indicated by Rossetti,—to general readers, because it brings them a pearl of great price in a worthy yet modern setting.

CYRIL BRETT,

University College, Cardiff.

*Postscript.*—Since I wrote these words, I have read Professor Kittredge’s book on the origins, in litera-



ture and folk-lore, of "Sir Gawayne." For this admirable work all students will be grateful. Its main contention is, I think, unproven, but is forcibly and skilfully set forth : while the fascinating collection of folk-lore bearing on the poem, and the excellent bibliography, are beyond praise. Every reader of "Sir Gawayne" in the original or Mr. Hare's version, should also read Professor Kittredge's "A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight" (Harvard University Press, 1916 : pp. viii., 323 : 8s. 6d.).



SIR GAWAYNE  
AND THE  
GREEN KNIGHT.

---

BOOK I.

---

Of the fashion of King Arthur's Court at Camelot, and of his banquet made by him upon Yuletide ; and of the coming of a Fearsome Master which laid a challenge that Gawayne took up.

---

When siege and battle-shock had broken Troy  
And burnt that burg to brands and ashes grey,  
When he that was for guile without alloy  
Unmatchable on earth did forfeit pay,  
—Tried and condemned by those he did betray ;—  
Aeneas then, a captain of the best,  
Loosed fluttering sails upon the water-way  
With his high kith, and sea-tossed won in quest  
New realms and golden islands scattered by the west.

Then journeys Romulus with strength to Rome,  
Building her white towers with a little band,  
When with much boasting thither did he come,  
And cast his anchors in the stranger strand,  
And named that Rome was erewhile waste and sand,  
From Piedmont eastward Langabarde won ground,  
And Ticius' navy rocked by Tuscan strand,  
But Brutus northward of the silver sound,  
Achieved these flowery meads, the fair delightful ground.

A land of war, wreck, wonder, bale and bliss,  
And of bold men that loved debate and wrought  
Such marvels as from that time unto this  
No land can equal. Of Arthur who is thought  
Their courtliest King of all, I shall report  
The most outrageous wonder ever known  
If ye will listen,—it is no thing of naught  
But from long years recorded and writ down,  
And I shall tell it as I heard it sung in town.

### THE HISTORY.

Arthur the King holds court at Camelot  
Upon a Christmastide ; his princes there  
Were from their many realms together got  
To hold rich revel that is the flout of care.  
Quick as the nimble creatures of the air  
They met in medley of the tournament  
Ofttimes, beneath the fluttering banners rare,  
And thronged back thence to Court, the long day spent,  
Sworn brothers all alike to newer merriment.

For this same feast was holden fifteen days  
Continuously, with all man could devise  
Of meat and mirth, with gladsome glee always  
Most glorious for to hear ; by day they arise  
To sportive strains, nor do they close their eyes  
By night, but in the dance they mix anon  
Lady with lord ; thus dwell they, in such wise ;—  
Ladies that lovelier lived there never none,  
With knights of most renown excepting Christ alone.

With all the joy in life they met together,  
Each with the lady to himself most dear,  
Caught by that Christmastide into one tether.  
Comely was Arthur, King, by dais there,  
And of all ladies loveliest, Guinevere.  
Arthur was lofty of spirit, brave in fight ;  
His men attend by the dais this New Year  
His progress, brought to hall with many a knight ;  
And now the sewers bear aloft the silver bright,

(As clerks make end their chanting of the Mass)  
And set the dishes in a double share  
To all the knights beside the King's high place.  
Loud rose their cries, these clerks and others there,  
Whom name in drinking, "Christmas," and "New Year,"  
And some hold gifts behind them in one hand  
And ask the ladies to debate with care,  
And choose ; these laugh to be with guile outplann'd  
But laugh the more to have them you may understand.

This mirth they make ere yet the meat is brought,  
Then wash, and all to supper take their way ;  
The higher marshalled, as was fittest thought,  
By higher seats ; i' th' midst, in royal array  
Of thin-spun silk, sits Guinevere the gay  
At the rich dais, beneath a canopy  
That doth the tapis-work of Tars display  
With fair Toulouse, enwoven joyously  
With gems,—of price, with pennies should you think  
to buy.

She was the loveliest lady to descry  
With her grey eyes on any summer day,  
(Who boasts a fairer to have seen with eye  
Speaketh, but speaketh false, I dare well lay).  
Now Arthur might not eat, I have heard say  
He loathed long sitting, restless as a child  
In all its jolly madness, and as gay  
In life's delight, his brain and young blood wild  
Keep him from resting, and as yet unreconciled,

Old custom stays his hand from dish and cup,  
To drink the red wine or the nappy ale,  
Till some newcomer break the matter up  
Of an adventurous chance the uncouth tale,  
(Yet such as with the credence might prevail  
Of the wise men, to be not held a lie,)  
Of princes and their arms and silver mail  
Or kindred matter ; lacking history,  
A knight must seek his counter and his jeopardy

Set life at hazard of the chanceful lists  
As trustless fortune shall adjudge the game.  
This was his custom at the time of mists,  
When frosts with winter airs at Yuletide came,  
And therefore, though he may not eat for blame,  
He talks the trifles that kings talk at feasts.  
Agravayne and Gawayne, pillars of fame,  
Each side the Queen attending her behests,  
With Ywaine and with Bawdwin were the chiefest  
guests.—

Bawdwin the bishop, Ywain Urien's son ;  
Agravayne, Gawayne, Arthur's nephews were.  
At other boards sits many a princely one.  
Then comes the first course with loud trumpets' blare  
(Those golden reeds which painted banners bear),  
The noble pipes, the little kettles sound,  
Wild warbles wakening startle the clear air  
Till the heart leaps for joy, and all around  
Grave seneschals direct bright platters overground.

So plenteously 'twere hard to set arights  
One silver dish the more, clean upon cloth,  
Fresh food was there, abundance of delights,  
To each twain dishes twelve and, nothing loth,  
Goblets of beer and of the bright wine both,  
Now you have guessed (wherefore of this no more)  
That staring Want but little business doth  
In this bright dwelling, but, the first course o'er,  
Came more sounds than clear music as at the great door

A Fearsome Master entering stays the mirth ;  
From neck to loins most stoutly built of brawn,  
Mayhap he was the greatest of the earth  
For giant-like so rode he oft by lawn,  
Great-backed, great-breasted, though his belt was drawn  
And waist and belly slenderly beseen,  
Unblithe by twilight ere the cocks have crawn  
Were he to meet, though fashioned well and clean,  
For both his hue and favour were the deep ink green.

Even all was green, this fellow and his weeds,  
With a green coat close clinging to his side  
O'er which a peerless mantle brave succeeds  
Lined with bright fur and that displayed for pride,  
Likewise his furred hood with the green was dyed  
(Though now caught back, and clasped, and hanging  
low).

His green hose grip his calves ; there might be spied  
Striped silken straps beside, with goodly show  
Bracing the bright clean spurs that gleam and greenly glow.

Gay shoes he wore and the rare emerald  
Powdered with green stars all his bright array,  
His silken striped belt the gleam exhaled  
And alway sparkled ; flies were broidered gay  
With gems i' th' saddle-silk,—it would dismay  
To tell but half his gauds both low and high !  
Those gold-stuffed beads of green and birds, I say,  
'Twere pain to tell of them ! The peytrel high  
Was swung with golden bells and ringing jauntily.

The stirrups, tail-strap, bridle and saddlebow  
Were green or else a-glimmer with green stones,  
The steed himself who carries him can show  
No hue save green or what with green atones ;  
His bridle broidered. That horse was large of bones  
For managing by any of a rabble,  
But for the present master that he owns,  
He found him ever his best horse in stable,  
Unto all strange adventures ready and serviceable.



As the steed's mane was green so the knight's hair  
Was likewise green, and by the shoulders hung  
In wavy locks, and his great beard in air  
Seems a green bush when rainy Spring is young,  
His sweeping sleeves as now full closely clung,  
Looped by the arms and gathered in a knot,  
The silken trappings they trailed not among,  
But fixed there fast,  
As do the cloaks of Kings that close about the throat ;

The mane was kempt and clean and fresh and fine,  
And crisped in many a strange fantastic knot ;  
There was no single hair that did not twine  
About a thread of gold that loosened not  
Bound all with ribbon, nor had they forgot  
The forelock, both were bound and gold-entwined,  
And all the tail's length myriad jewels dot  
In sparkling eyes, a thong doth all upbind,  
With peal of little bells to ring upon the wind.

Like the bright lightning in the nether air  
It seemed, so they that watched him inly swore,—  
It seemed that no man mortal anywhere  
Might bide his blow and live,—yet, strange, he wore  
Gorget, nor helm, nor bright shield nevermore,  
Nor any plate pertaining unto arms,  
But, all red berries, high in hand he bore  
An holly-bush, that never frost alarms,  
Greenest of earth's green things in height of winter  
harms.

I' th' other hand he bore (what can be liked,  
For savagery, to naught that can be told,—  
Essay who will) an axe broad-edged and spiked,  
—The spike enwrought of green steel and of gold,—  
The head an ell-yard long and gleaming cold  
Beneath the burnish ; shaped shrewd blows to deal,  
And sharp's a razor. The huge head keeps his hold  
Upon the stock bewound with strands of steel  
Inlaid with green, and therebeside looped up with zeal,

And all adown the shaft, and knotted oft,  
There runs a thong whence tassels sprightly dance.  
Thus moves this knight, but nothing fair nor soft ;  
Drives to the high-seat, dreading no ill-chance,  
Saluting none, but with a scornful glance ;—  
“Where is”, he cries, “the governor of this rout ?  
I'll reason with him here if he advance !”  
He rolled his eyes and glares on all about,  
While him of most renown he strives to single out.

A hush falls, all men wondering behold  
The green man greener than the grass dew-wet,  
Or green enamel upon flaming gold.  
Some slightly move, as nearer him to get,  
More sit stone-still and utter silence met  
His asking, all men gaze with doubtful eye,  
Sights they had many seen but one not yet  
Wrenched from the world more wondrously awry,  
Wherefore the King's word died, the minstrels' melody.

As they were slipped on sleep and slumbered all,  
They deem these things illusion faery,  
And no sound wakens nor no light footfall.  
Some, that would speak, withhold through courtesy,  
That he to whom they all owe fealty  
May speak before them, wherefore in short space  
Arthur the King makes answer fearlessly ;  
“Warrior, awhile light down our feast to grace,  
Then what thy will is we will learn in time and place.”

“Not so by Him that sitteth upon Height !  
To dwell here any while is not my will,  
But sith the praise is gone forth of thy might  
That men esteem thy burg the noblest still,  
Thy men the bravest, riding upon hill  
Their fleet steeds, and of skill well prov’n and shown  
In knightly games, I thought it not so ill,  
—Bethinking me of thy high dealing known  
And courtesy,—to come here claiming as my own

The right to seek some knight in knightly play,  
And for a pledge of peace I bear this bough,—  
I would no war in weeds of holiday !  
I have at home hauberk and helm I trow,  
Shield and sharp spear and fighting gear enow,  
Then grant me fair the game I ask by right,  
Seeing that the garb I bear makes softer show.  
I seek no harm but come for pastime dight.”  
And Arthur made reply and said : “Sir Courteous  
Knight,

"If thou crav'st battle seek thy counter here."

"Nay 'tis not battle I seek," he cries agen,

"Among these beardless babes what is to fear?

For were I on an high steed armed, why then

Weak though I be I think among these men

There's none to match me; hearken then and know

What knight soever, bold of blood and brain,

Dare proffer and have back of me one blow

With this axe,—let him keep it, it is heavy enow!

And if I bide the first I little reck.

And now if any knight a game would win,

And with this rich axe strike me by the neck,

He need but leap here, have it and begin,

While I stand stiff as stone this hall within.

(He keeps the axe to boot.) His respite out,

A day and twelve-month, when next Yule is in,

He must come seek my dwelling with no rout,

There have his counter buffet, let him never doubt."

If still at first were they not stiller now?

No sound at all uprose from any side.

The green knight settles him by saddlebow,

And rolls his red eyes searching far and wide

Whoso should rise, and his lithe fingers tied,

Which twitching in his green beard never cease,

Then coughed and with loud tone of insult cried;

"Are these knights Arthur's that whole realms  
deprease,

Whereof the rumour runs through many provinces?

What boots your boasting, your high insolence,  
Your pride, your wrath, your victories all and each,  
For now the whole of your renown flies hence,  
Sped thither by the words of one man's speech,—  
Why, the rogues shake beyond my axe's reach ! ”  
With this he laughed so loud his whole face lined  
With wrinkles, but his blushing doth apeach  
The King's hot shame, then : “ Folly shalt thou find,”  
He cries in tones of menace like the rising wind,

“ For by Heaven thou dost seek no other thing !  
Yet know I none of thy great words afear'd,—  
The axe, here, and for God's sake ! ” cries the King  
Striding upon him. The other his bulk upreared,  
And vaults to ground, and standing overpeered  
By the full head all other in the house,  
As with a stern cheer, stroking his great beard,  
And drawing down his coat, his head he bows  
No more dismayed than if one had brought him to  
carouse.

Herewith Gawayne from by the Queen's high place  
Leans forward crying ; “ Lo, I thus openly  
Beseech my lord to grant me of his grace  
To have this play ; for if he summon me  
I may approach with no discourtesy,  
—If my liege-lady think thereof no ill,—  
For when a challenge is preferred so high  
Before your court, though you would have it still,  
Yet do these many knights but wait upon your will.

It were unseemly then as may be guessed  
If all we stir not,—none alive more able  
Than your knights hereabouts,—and I the least  
In wit and worth of any of your table,  
Shall least be missed ; in nothing commendable  
Am I, save your blood, Uncle, in my veins,—  
Then sith this thing is but despicable,  
Not worthy your endeavouring, what remains ?  
Give it me that first asked it, fitter for my pains ;

If I speak ill before your knights let them  
Determine.” Whispering then all judge the same,  
To free the wearer of the diadem  
And to Sir Gawayne to decree the game.  
So Arthur calls him and Gawayne ran and came  
And knelt unto him ; he lifts him decorously,  
Gives him God’s blessing and speaks thus free from  
blame ;  
“ Counsel him, merry Coz, so cunningly  
That time enough go by ere he reply to thee ! ”

Now has Gawayne the axe and should have hacked  
Save that the other, but with unblanched face,  
Stayeth him crying ; “ Renew we first the pact,—  
Deliver me on oath thy name and race  
That I may know thee at the trysting-place.”  
“ Good faith, I Gawayne do this buffet drive,  
And then, a day and twelve-month passed in space,  
Myself, armed how thou wilt, engage to arrive  
At thy house having for company no man alive.”

Thereto the Green Knight answer makes again ;  
"God !" cries the Green Knight, "This delighteth  
me !

So may I ever thrive as I am fain  
To have my blow, thou dost so readily  
Rehearse the compact, yet this swear to me ;  
Swear thou to seek me out upon what strand  
Thou dream'st me living, there t' have pay and fee."—  
"Thy name nor place I neither understand,  
Warrior, where thou dwellest nor in what strange land.

By him that wrought me, speak, where lies thy shore,  
Lest wandering I lose thee gone astray,  
Whom yet I swear to seek !" He cries : "No more !  
One oath sufficeth on a New Year day.  
If I shall tell thee, having had my pay,  
Where lie my lands, set forth and nothing doubt,  
But if I speak not, then the other way,  
Thou without blame may'st tarry with this rout  
And live long in thy land and never wend thereout.

Take thy grim tool, let see thy striking now !"  
"Gladly," cries Gawayne, making ready boun,  
And plants his feet. The other lowers his brow  
And strokes his green locks forward from his crown,  
And low and lovely did they fall adown ;—  
Then Gawayne gathers the great axe upon height  
And shears through flesh, fat, bone ;—over his gown  
The green head totters, drops, rolls, and in despite  
Many start forth to spurn and kick it from their sight.

(The axe stood buried deep i' th' floor o' th' hall.)  
Then o'er the green out-twines the oozing blood,  
But that dead body doth not falter nor fall,  
But starts forth stiffly where the princes stood,  
Grasping with one dead hand as it were wood  
To find its head, and clutched and caught it fair,  
Makes for the horse the near'st way that it could,  
Bearing his own head by the bloodied hair,  
As him no mishap ailed all headless though he were ;

Striketh the stirrup, vaults his horse's back,  
Then moves slow round that ugly trunk that bled. .  
For matter of disquiet few men lack  
As toward the dais he sets the streaming head,  
Whose eyes unlocking show bloodshotten, red,  
And staring broad ; then speak the moving lips :  
"That thou be ready, even as thou hast said  
In these knights' hearing, lest thy fame eclipse  
Look to it ere away thy day and twelvemonth slips.

To have my stroke against that thou did'st show me  
Get thee to the Green Chapel, bring no friend,  
The Knight of the Green Chapel many know me.  
Thou knowest thy compáct ; forget not, wend,  
Or be known recreant till thy life shall end."  
He wrenched the reins and suddenly both were fled  
Through the hall-door but whither no mortal gleaned,  
For from their sights he charges with the head,  
And ever the flint-fire of the hoofs flies out blood-red.



They marvel where he goes, those mazéd men,  
But that can none resolve of all the press.  
Naught is but question and surmise. What then?  
They hold this thing a miracle I guess.  
Arthur with Gawayne laughs at this strangeness  
But cloaks his wonder, saying to the Queen :  
“Dear dame, what cheer? Take nothing in distress,—  
Apt, apt it is this craft that we have seen,  
A fitting feasting fellow was this man in green

Who graced our dancing, singing and delight,  
And yet a strange one I will not deny.  
But now to supper will I take me right,  
And with glad heart do all things merrily.”  
He turns then on Gawayne a glancing eye ;  
“Up with thine axe that hath so amply mown,  
Up with it high upon the tapestry !”  
And as the King bade straightway was it done,  
There by the truest token it makes true things known

Of strangest happenings ; then they throng again  
Unto the boards, these gay knights all a rout.  
Arthur was brought to place and Sir Gawáyne,  
And nimble sewers deftly bear about  
To each a double portion without doubt,  
And minstrels their sweet airs play delicately  
Till daylight dies that is with mirth drawn out  
In many lands. Yet, Gawayne, look and see  
That when thine hour is out there shall no tarrying be.

HERE ENDETH THE FIRST BOOK.

## BOOK II.

Of the arraying of Sir Gawayne in his supple and fair Harness, and of the Banquet Arthur made him, and of his resigned Departure from amidst those bewailing Knights; and what fair Harbour he won to upon Christmas Morn.

---

This harbinger had Arthur this New Year  
Of wondrous happenings; at the banqueting  
He spake but little, yet he longed to hear  
High boasting tales of any marvellous thing.  
Glad was Gawayne when first the year did spring  
But heavy may be, doubt ye not, anon :—  
Though he that has well drunk may laugh and sing,  
Fleet flies a year and fellow yieldeth none;  
And first and last accord not, oft, nor jump as one.

And this the wise man knoweth certainly.  
So this Yule glideth and this year away,  
Each season in his order slipping by;  
The first is Lent, it needeth not to say,  
With feckless fish the hungry to dismay,  
Then the world's weather doth with winter chide  
And cold clings close, but after comes a day  
When higher up aloft the great clouds ride  
Which send the warm soft showers, and soon on every  
side

On the fair plains the little flowers may show,  
Both ground and groves then green is all their weed.  
Birds busy them to build and sing also  
For solace, that the Summer shall succeed  
Full daintily by many a bank and mead ;  
And buds in the rank hedgerows thickly crowd,  
From sharpness of the pitiless Winter freed,  
To swell and bloom when times have them allowed,  
And plenty noble notes are heard in greenwood proud.

Then, the season of Summer with soft airs,  
And Zephyr breathing light on seed and blade.  
The trembling leaves drip dew which kindly rears  
The herb, all joyously and unafraid,  
His leaves to meet the blissful sun dispread.  
Then Harvest maketh ware the stubborn grain  
Of Winter nigh and not to be delayed.  
His drought sends dust full high over the plain  
Flying the earth's fair face, and thereto wake again

Grim and wroth winds that wrestle with the sun.  
The leaves light earthward from the linden tree.  
The tender and green grass is grey anon ;  
And then all ripens and rots, and certainly  
In many a yesterday the year runs by.  
If then is Winter the world asks no sage ;  
His surety is hung in Heaven high,  
The white moon, halting in her pilgrimage,  
This biddeth Gawayne mind the hour of his voyage.

And Arthur holds high revel for his sake,  
For love of him upon All Hallows Day,  
—A noble revel he might not forsake.  
Though they were sorrowing he might not stay.  
They thought to send him joyously away  
With a last feast, these knights and ladies all.  
Then he said truly : “Uncle, by my Fay,  
You know my chances and this matter all,  
I crave leave to depart, it may not else befall.

I must go seek the Green Man,” he avowed,  
“As God shall speed me.” Then these knights were  
fain,—  
To counsel him, with all that peerage proud,  
Sir Doddinaval de Saváge, Ywain,  
The Duke of Clarence, and that mighty twain  
Sir Bedyver and Bors ; in dolorous sort  
Stood Lionel, Lancelot, Errik,—but in vain,—  
With many a one of worship at that Court,  
As Lucan named The Good, and Mador de la Port.

All sick at heart, for they held Gawayne dear  
And deemed that he would surely never more  
Draw sword with them ; but yet he makes brave  
cheer,  
“For though his destinies look grey and hoar,  
The man must try them” . . . and the long night wore,  
And with the fitful winds of the chill morn  
He asks his arms ; and divers spread the floor  
With tapis-work and thereunto have borne  
A gilded heap of harness red as the sunset corn.

He tries the irons, each piece is supple and good.  
His doublet was of precious silken stuff,  
Of Cappadocian leather was the hood,  
—The furs that lined it they were costly enough.  
His steel shoes fitted well and nothing rough.  
His legs in lovely greaves and without spot  
They case, and add thereto the polaynes tough,  
Rubbed clean and knotted fast with many a knot  
And strap of gold that from the knees they loosened not.

About his brawny thighs the cuishes cling,  
Their quaint fantastic clasps were featly caught,  
Resplendently his byrny shines, each ring  
Woven upon a proud stuff gaily wrought ;  
His burnished brace and gloves of plate they brought  
And fixed the gold spurs to his heels with pride.  
They bring his surcoat with rich blazoning fraught,  
Cowters, and girdle-silk unto his side,  
And all his gear to shield him through the world to ride.

His lightest loop or latchet gleams with gold.  
Then, harnessed as he is, he hearkens Mass,  
And offering makes for mercies manifold  
At the high altar of the holy place.  
Then to the company with easy pace.  
Ladies and lords kiss him at leavetaking  
And weep, commending him unto Christ's grace,  
And Arthur with them, the young noble king.  
By this was Gringalet upon the ground pawling

Flaunting it restless in his saddle gay  
With plenteous pomp of golden fringes dight  
And studs of gold ; the bridle every way  
Bound up with gold ; the peytrel hangings light,  
The coverture, the crupper, no less bright  
The royal skirts that proud i' th' air are blown,  
The saddle-bows, all bordered for the knight  
With studs o' th' rich red gold, of gold each one,  
All glimmers and all glows like to the gleaming sun.

The shining helm he hastily clasps on,  
Fast riveted in medley not to fail,  
Within stuffed and lined warm ; aloft it shone,  
And there was hasped to flutter in the gale  
A silken kerchief over the aventayle,  
Decked and bestuck with gems that glance away,  
And thereon were the birds of hill and dale  
Cunningly needled, as the Popinjay,  
And Turtles that sit preening through a summer's day,

And truelove knots that both were deft and fine,  
(As many a maid seven winters wrought thereon)  
But costlier far men saw his circlet shine,—  
The brave device of sparkling diamond-stone  
That clips his helm. His shield they brought anon,  
Whose ground was gules ; (beside his bawdrick bright  
To dangle from his neck he has it thrown,)  
And in pure gold the Pentangle was pight  
Upon the gules ; why this pertains to that true knight,

'Tis in my mind to tell. Bide little rhyme  
While I show forth and speak a curious night.  
Tarry my history as for this time.  
This sign was set of Solomon the wise king  
Who wrought it first, of Truth a tokening.  
It has five points and each point each o'erlaps  
And they all lock as endless as a ring,  
And sith its fashion hath nor break nor gaps,  
It well accords with him who throughout all ill haps

Was faithful found in five and in fivefold.  
Of evil void by wall that goes in moat ;  
A good man known and pure as refined gold,  
And therefore may he bear his endless knot,  
This gentle and true knight in shield and coat.  
Faultless were his five wits and failed him never,  
His fingers five they failed him not a groat,  
In Christ's five wounds his trust was fixéd ever, )  
From the five joys in fight he might his thought not  
sever,

For those the Gracious Queen had of her Child,  
And therefrom draws he strength of heart and might.  
In his shield's larger half her image mild  
Rose lively painted, beautiful in sight.  
Thereon he oft-times gazed in cruel fight.  
His fifth five Courtesy as doth befall,  
And Generous Dealing open as the light,  
And Fellowship, not to diminish or pall,  
And Pity, Pity that is sum of virtues all.

Above all other knights these were his own,  
Enwoven in his heart and true as steel,  
And seam and join and sundering are unknown,  
It ends at its beginning fast and leal.  
This Pentangle it fits him every deal.  
And now he is arrayed at full the gay,  
Accoutred princely-wise from head to heel,  
He gives those men the glad hour of the day,  
“For the last time,” he thinks, and rides upon his way.

The sparks fly from the hoofs and he is gone  
To drive a voyage there might none be loather ;  
They speak lamentingly who look thereon  
(Of the Round Table soothly every brother),  
“Time shall go by ere cometh such another,  
His fellow upon earth ’twere far to seek.  
Arthur had wrought more warely by God’s Mother  
To have sent him not all utterly to wreck,  
Unto an elvish man his every bone to break !

What King was ever to such counsel pressed,  
To send a glorious hero from his side  
But for a trifle and a Christmas jest,  
And that for arrogance and for mere pride !”  
The watchers weep. He may no more abide.  
Through many a wildsome track he fares that day,  
Through Britain realm he wendeth far and wide,  
Friendless save for his foal as histories say,  
“And there was none but God to talk with by the way.



Much wandering he nigheth to North Wales.  
Upon his left hand lieth open sea,  
Anglesea isle and ships that push with sails.  
By Holyhead runneth a promontory  
Whereby is fording, he full wearily  
Seeks thence an uncouth land, an uncouth road.  
Of the Green Knight and Chapel asketh he  
Of men of Wirral that the wild waste trod,  
They prize not good men highly nor love greatly God.

“They had seen none of no such hue of green,  
Chapel nor man.” The knight by passes strange  
And many a toilsome bank climbs saddest of men  
And weary wilds was he doomed to range  
And heights to scale. His cheer was oft to change  
Ere he might see his chapel far away,  
Bereft mens’ loving sights and garth and grange,  
And sharp-stung at each ford by the flying spray—  
’Twas strange was there no foe to seek to bar his way,

And that so grisly it behoved him fight.  
Marvels a-many by each mount appears.  
’Twere pain to tell a tithing of the sight.  
With serpents fought he somewhat and with bears,  
With wolves, wild men, and savage mountaineers,  
And snorting ettins of the upper crags.  
Had not God strengthened him in thick of fears  
He were but dead, yet never the more he lags,  
Though the rust rots his harness and his gay garb rags.

But worse than battle is the winter season,  
The cold clear water shedding from the clouds  
That froze ere it the fallow earth might freeze on,  
In hail by night. In naked rocks he shrouds,  
His limbs half-frozen into an heap he crowds ;  
Then streams fall clattering sharp and like flint-stone  
Icicles hang.

Then sleeps he and forgets both moon and sun,  
Of peril and his pain and plight full hard to run.

On a clear morning by a hillock-side,  
To Mary Star of Heaven he makes his moan  
To bring him, for 'twas now nigh Christmastide,  
Unto some dwelling where, no more alone,  
He may find succour and somewhat rest fordone.  
Praying he plunges deep in forest old,  
And marvellous wild with high oaks over stone.  
The hapless birds that the bare branches hold  
Were piteously piping then for pain of the cold.

He glides beneath them to a frozen mere  
Where the sharp winds cut deeper than a knife.  
But most he prayeth that he may somewhere  
Come to His service, born of maiden and wife,  
To free His world from its long brutish strife,  
Some day ; crying, "Lady bring me to succeed  
Unto some chapel lest I lose my life,  
In mere waste wilderness, for this I plead,  
And I do pray thereto my Pater and Ave and Creed."

So rides he praying, the knight with yellow hair,  
And, "the Rood speed me," cries he in his throat,  
He crossed himself but thrice ere he was ware  
Of a dwelling on a high lawn in a moat.  
Everywhere by the stream's edge were to note  
Great trees by the hundred rising in leafless glade,  
Over earth's winter-white and frosty coast.  
A two-mile compassed park the men had made,  
And for a pale a spiked and thick-set palisade.

He sees the castle through the shining oaks,  
And sees with joy and shaketh him from sloth ;  
"Good harbour grant, beseech ye." He unlocks  
His helmet-hasps and doffs it, little loath  
In thanking Jesus and St. Julian both,  
For Julian brings to housing, books avouch,  
The weary wandering pilgrim where he go'th.  
Gringalet feels the gilt spurs deeply encroach  
And starts forth and they fortune on the chief approach.

The bridge was high uphaled and gates locked fast,  
The walls were white and comely and well arrayed,  
They shall not fear for any tempest's blast.  
A deep-dug double moat the men had made,  
The little ripples upon the water played,  
The wall went down in water wonder deep,  
And upward haled a huge height undismayed.  
'Twas well-wrought stone to the very corbels steep ;  
Well-wrought the battlements, sound may the inmates  
sleep.

'Twas white and fair, not builded in an hour,  
And all aloft the battlements between  
At even spaces, many a gay watch-tower,  
With many a lovely loop looked down full clean ;  
— A nobler barbican was never seen.  
The hall full high thereafter meets his eyes,  
Full thickly pinnaced over the green,  
Then carven capitals he did devise,  
And chalk-white chimneys many and of noble size,

On tower-roofs of the glimmering stone well shorn.  
The man on Gringalet beholds the sight  
Of turrets in the frost-light of the morn,  
As they were pared from paper seemed they white.  
“Within it were no evil,” thinks the knight,  
“To linger till the feast-time be away.”  
The porter comes, a purely pleasant wight,  
“Good Sir, crave harbour for me for to-day.”  
“Ay, by St. Peter,” cries he, “and without delay,

For this, the next day, and the days you will.”  
Therewith he clambers down from the high wall  
And comes again, and many throng theretil.  
They let the draw-bridge at the gate-house fall  
And cross out friendly and kneel down withal  
On the cold earth him worthily to greet.  
To those at the broad gate aloud they call  
To fling all wide ; he passes over fleet  
And bids them rise. The many starting to their feet,

Some hold the saddle till he shall be lit,  
And some lead Gringalet away to stable,  
Others about him press, nor cease a whit  
To bring him to the high hall and to table.  
His helm and brand stout knaves and serviceable  
Bear with his blazoned shield away as now.  
They heap more firing then to crack and babble,  
And Gawayne greeteth each i' th' red warm glow.  
Then from his chamber comes the host and bowing low

To greet and bid him welcome that was come ;  
“ Whatever thing is here your own it is.”  
“ Grammercy, Host, Christ quite ye all and some.”  
Then, as true friend that bringeth not but bliss,  
Stoutly he folds him in his arms to kiss,  
Then standing back Gawayne regards him well,  
He was of prime of life and huge, I-wis,  
His eyes as any fire were fierce and fell,  
Bearded he was and free. There is no more to tell.

A captain for an host of goodly men  
He seems, to lead them forth in happy hour.  
To serve Sir Gawayne one he setteth then.  
His bedchamber was built in a bright bower,  
And silken coverlets were in that tower,  
And comely cloths and curtains curious,  
Swung from gold rings ; it looked bright as a flower,  
For all was tapestry within that house,  
And thither is he brought where men his garments loose,

Despoiling him with mirth of his wet weeds.  
They bring gay robes anon, a six or seven,  
"That he will choose," the chamberlain then pleads,  
And one he chose full seemly and that was given,  
Glad with all brightest colours under Heaven,  
Full-skirted, glowing ; "this man surpasses all,"  
Thought they that marked, "he who should doubt it  
even

I think he were a spirit both prone and dull,  
For surely never God made man so beautiful.

And what time in the world he lingers here,  
On any stricken field where brave men fight,  
'Twere far to seek to look upon his peer."  
Thus reasoned they that watched, then brought the  
knight

To the chimney and a chair and charcoal-light,  
And cushions passing rich and hassocks quaint.  
They clad him with a mantle nobly bright,  
Broidered and furred, he needeth no complaint,  
The snowy ermine lacked not, but without restraint

Lined both the hood and gown eke sumptuously.  
He warmed him well, then mended was his cheer.  
The sewers served him, seemly for to see.  
They set him up a table on trestles fair  
Beside the settle, and spotless everywhere,  
They spread upon the boards a cloth full clean.  
The napkin and the salt-dish they were there,  
And silver spoons, he washed and without teen  
Regards the diverse dishes with their sauces keen,

And sundry fishes brought him in a trice,  
Baked in the bread or broiled him on the coal,  
Sodden or boiled and flavoured with the spice,  
And of the sauce so sly he taketh toll,  
For sauce he liked. "Do you bring banquets whole  
To each chance stranger?" Thereto laughingly,  
"Take now this goodly penance, have thy dole,  
And after rise amended," they reply.  
The wine runs in his head and pain and sorrow fly.

He speaks with mirth as was his wont long since.  
Then courteously, by points of questioning,  
They seek to learn the country of that prince,  
From whence he comes with his much wandering,  
Till chances happily him thither bring.  
"Of the Round Table," he answers their request,  
"Of Arthur the most courteous noble King."  
Loud laughs his host, as doth a man well blest,  
That 'tis Gawayne arrives at the time of God's own  
feast.

"Gawayne is come," each whispereth to each,  
"He wields all prowess, praise and fair mannér,  
Now shall we hear what riches are in speech,  
And blameless terms of noble talking hear.  
Of God it comes that he should now draw near  
When, blithe that He is born, men sit and sing.  
Of courtly custom somewhat shall appear  
Well worth the learning, and a gayer thing,  
Men say he hath the skill and lore of love-talking."

Now falls black night although the day seemed long.  
Then to the Chapel clerks seek out the way,  
And with the clear bells peal out Evensong,  
And ring them nobly at the death of day.  
The host plucks Gawayne's sleeve once more to say ;  
"Thou com'st the welcomest of men to-night."  
Therewith they kiss. Within the Chapel lay  
A little chamber quaintly wrought and bright,  
And thence the lady comes to look upon the knight

With all her maids. Most lovely to be seen  
For lustrous skin and for her peerless eyes,  
Fairer, he thought, than Guenevere the Queen.  
He draws near then to cherish her whom he spies  
Perfectly wrought of arms and breast and thighs,  
And all things else ; she did the left hand hold  
Of an old lady wrought upon other wise,  
Eager and quick the girl, the lady cold,  
This full of warm red blood, the other extreme old.

Her snood sewn with clear pearls the wife's hair fills,  
Throat bared, her bright breasts show a little in sight,  
White as the youngest snow-drift on the hills.  
That other muffles it in veil milk-white  
Of many folds, which overcovers quite,  
And cloaks her swart chin that it not appeared.  
With turrets and toys her black brows had she plight,—  
Naught save the nose and black brows had she bared,  
Her lips and her two eyes and they were sour and bleared.



Her buttocks broad, and short, and thick I-wis,—  
A lady worthy of worship you will say !  
But oh that other delightfuller to kiss,  
Now when Sir Gawayne glanced upon Gaat gay  
He craves leave thither and depart.olt and  
He bows low to that ancient lad ep the kni  
But to the wife, for ever and fo. he his h  
His knightly services he doth prst a  
And a little hasps her in his arms in kissing her.

“Soothly I am your servant at your will.”  
They lead him thence, the loathly and the fair,  
Unto the hearth, and folk the wine-cup fill,  
And mix therein the hot spice rich and rare.  
The host in fooling springs into the air,  
Directing sport and merriment and play ;  
He takes his hood off with a flourish, and fair  
Stakes it upon a spear : “Win that who may,—  
The knave that makes us laugh the most shall bear it  
away !

And I shall wrestle with the best,” cries he,  
“Ere I shall lose my clothes unto my friends !”  
With such words he makes merry sportively  
To glad Gawayne with games in hall, and spends  
The night in jollity till each one wends  
With lights to bed, and bids adieu to mirth.  
Christmas morn breaks, the day the glad man spends  
Greeting with festival the Saviour’s birth,  
And joy awakes in every dwelling on the earth ;

Here not the least ; with delicates curious,  
 And stout men for the feasting-tide arrayed,  
 And that old ancient wife, highest i' th' house,  
 Sits with them and beside her, the book said,  
 And i' it plucks there was for Gawayne laid  
 Beside the com'st th' th' host ; then readily  
 Sewers bear they k' while much men laughed and played,  
 But save themselves, the twain but little see,  
 Much comforted and blest in either's company,

So dear their dalliance and their whispered words,  
 Clean and not bawdy, which was to their praise.  
 The loud trump with the merry pipe accords,  
 When with much piping minstrels come their ways,—  
 The little kettle upon the stroke obeys.  
 Each minds his matters and they theirs, and fair  
 They drive the second and the third feast-days,  
 And now the last o' th' feast-days to appear,  
 The joy of St. John's feast was gentle for to hear.

But there were guests to go on the grey morn,  
 These wondrous early woke and drank the wine,  
 And once more danced they, ere, somewhat forlorn,  
 At last away unwillingly they twine  
 O'er the bright frost and in the clear sunshine,  
 But Gawayne going the good man draws aside :  
 " Unto the chimney in the chamber of mine,  
 My thanks that you have sojourned here this tide,  
 My worth is well the more that you deigned here to  
 abide,

To glad with your bright looks my house and feast."  
"For your relief, grammercy, in good faith,  
But 'tis my worth by knowing you hath increased,  
Not yours by knowledge of me," Sir Gawayne saith,  
"And God requite you both by holt and heath."  
The lord doth all his pains to keep the knight,  
Yet with much speaking loseth he his breath,  
"For," cries Gawayne, "I must away forthright."  
The other him demandeth why he left the sight

Of Arthur's court,—should he not grudge to tell—  
Voyaging here so boldly and alone,  
Ere of St. John's feast yet was rung the knell,  
Ere yet the Christmas holly was haled down,  
And his green leaves no more seen in a town?  
"You say but sooth," he answers, "I would find,  
—Where in the world it lieth, to me unknown,—  
A land, and that is running in my mind,  
Were the whole realm of Britain given me sealed and  
signed,

I would change it for that country. Tell me then  
If you have heard thereof, or seen with eye,  
In what place is a haunt, *The Chapel Green*,  
Held by the *Green Knight*, dwelling there hard by?  
There was a compact stricken faithfully,  
And, but I win there, I may not go back,  
And New Year times the tryst, I will not lie,  
And of the New Year do but three days lack,  
I had rather see the man to set me upon that track

By God's bright Sun than any earthly good.  
I had as lief fall dead as fail !” “Ha ! Marry !  
The Chapel ?” he cries, “It is but through the wood !  
Grieve for your tryst no more, nor wander weary,  
Part the fourth day but till the fourth day tarry,—  
Rest in thy bed, for long ere the mid-morn  
You shall arrive your opposite to harry.  
My guide shall point the tracks,—be not forlorn,—  
'Tis but a scant two-mile by Jesus Mary-born !”

Who then is gladder than Gawayne that tide,  
Who seeth his voyage to be nigh achieved ?  
“My dearest thanks, I will with you abide,  
And do your will, my care is all relieved.”  
Now hath mine host his sorrow from him reaved  
And brings the damsels from a neighbour room,  
For that would do him joy, as he believed.  
Then cries he, brawnily where he doth loom,  
“Have you not sworn, Gawayne, to abide here all my  
doom ?”

“Ay,” cries Gawayne, the other laughing oft,  
And monstrous wildly, cries ; “Behold and see,  
'Tis but to bide the morrow in thy loft,—  
For lo, these three days thou hast watched with me,  
Nor may'st thou to the full recovered be  
With meat and rest, thy journey scarce at end.  
My wife, if you will, shall bear you company,  
For I, if the morn's weather be my friend,  
Will to the woods with dawn the huntingtide to wend.”

And this grants Gawayne, bowing courteously.  
“Yea,” cries the host, “then strike we covenant,—  
What quarry in the wild wood falls to me  
That quarry change I, never to recant,  
Against what falls to thee or great or scant,  
Should'st thou win aught ; sweet friend, shall this be so ?”  
“If I win aught,” cries Gawayne, “that I grant.  
It likes me well that you should play also.”  
“Then,” cries the lord, “bring us to drink, to drink  
here, ho !

To drink this pledge, to drink this compact sworn.”  
The sewers bring the wine-cups and anon,  
And laughing loud they drain the last drop borne,  
To seal the pledge. Now day is over and gone.  
They linger somewhat after the setting sun  
To speak soft words, bereft each other's sight,  
And comelily they kiss, and one by one,  
Each lady she is gone and every knight,  
And every man of all with torches gleaming bright.

And yet ere the company broke  
They recorded that covenant oft,  
For the old lord of that folk  
Could well hold sport aloft.

HERE ENDETH THE SECOND BOOK.

## BOOK III.

Of the great cheer that the Lord of the Castle made Sir Gawayne, and the Lord's hunting of the Fox and the Wild-deer and the Boar ; and of the love for Sir Gawayne of the Lady of the Castle.

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The serving-men set tackle in accord,  
And truss the mails and see the girths are tight ;  
And not the last uprose that castle's lord,  
Away to the field ere ever it was light.  
They ate a sop so quickly as they might,  
Unhasped the kennel doors and called agood.  
Out come the sleepy hounds with tails upright  
Which huntsmen coupled, right as they well could,  
And so with bugle-blast away to the gay green wood.

There were an hundred huntsmen, I heard tell,  
That rode unto the chasing of that day.  
Thrice do the bugles blare, and fierce and fell,  
And all aloud the mighty hounds gan bay.  
Up to the heights the beaters take their way  
To hiding-huts ; the deer that mark the quest  
Made all for the heights, but fruitless their essay  
For those the beaters fiercely back repressed,—  
Then shouting rings and echo glad in gay forést.

They gave the harts their way, and let unchid  
The bucks bear thence their branching antlers wide,  
For 'twas their close-time and that lord forbid  
To speed one shaft where trod the males with pride ;  
But for the does they drove them from that side  
With, "Hay there ! Back there !" from the mountain's  
brow

To where through airy ways the arrows slide  
Sped by the bowmen, who are loosing now  
A shaft at every deer that darts beneath the bough.

What ! but they bleed and die and shriek and wallow,  
Struck by the barbs full broad in every place,  
And hurtling in pursuit the fleet hounds follow,  
While with high horns the hunt comes on apace,—  
The cry goes up of huntsmen and the chase,  
A cry and clang as though the cliff should burst !  
While at the beaters' huts, in little space,  
And stream and mountain as was plotted erst,  
They strike the few that 'scaped the bowmen at the first.

So learned were the lads that held the vale,  
So quick the greyhounds running all so light,  
So many deer they left to lie i' th' dale  
Wherever eye might glance they met the sight.  
That lord, who sees his quarry nothing slight,  
Cries with pure joy that might not be withstood  
"Abloy ! Abloy !" and drives the day to night,  
With horses trampling and with blasts full good,  
Ever away in bliss by merry lindenwood.

But Gawayne the good knight in gay bed lies,  
And closely curtained knows not what befalls,  
Though night hath wakened in the eastern skies,  
And daylight gleams and glimmers on the walls.  
But slumberingly he hears a voice that calls  
Softly his name, and feels a wind blow cold,  
He plucks the curious curtain where it falls  
Heavy to ground with scarlet and with gold,—  
It was the lady there, the loveliest to behold.

She drew the door to as she entered in,  
And bolted it with little fingers white.  
Long ponders Gawayne what these matters bin  
That draw one, fashioned forth so young and slight,  
All disarrayed betwixen day and night,  
Long he feigned sleep and never word he spake,  
Yet marvelling what that case betoken might.  
Then she her soft and stilly way doth take  
To the bed-side to watch him till he shall awake,

Crept through the curtains and above him hung  
O'er the clear counterpane, and did not stir.  
Then thought Gawayne : fairly to speak with tongue  
And ask what ill-chance hath befallen her  
Wherein she seeks my help, were seemlier.  
Therefore he feigns to wake and makes to rise,  
Crossing, as men do that an harm defer,  
Opens his lids and seems struck with surprise,  
But needs to feign no wonder at her merry eyes.



Her cheek and chin they were full sweet, full sweet,  
And sweetly blent with lovely red and white :  
Her little laughing lips they were right meet :  
And thus she spake ; " Good Morrow to my knight,  
So may one steal on you in your despite !  
Lo, you are caught, and captive shall be led ! "  
(And as she spake that word she laughed outright,)  
" Think not but I shall bind you in your bed, '  
Unless we shape us here a truce," the lady said.

" Good morrow, Lady," cries Gawayne the gay,  
" I yield myself your prisoner in this case,  
And hold that, by my faith, the better way,  
For I am taken, I may not quit this place."  
Laughing he spake : " but would you grant him grace  
To rise and dress, your captive therewithal  
Should in all fealty and in little space  
Present him for the doom that shall befall."  
" Nay, Marry ! " quoth that sweet, " that shall you  
least of all.

Lie still and rest, this judgment I ordain,  
Else shall I fetter fast both hand and side,  
For trust me truly ye are that Gawayne  
All the world worships wheresoever you ride.  
Your honour, your blithe semblance, are the pride  
Of lords and ladies and peoples near and far,  
Then with my captive knight I shall abide,—  
My lord doth harry the hind by cliff and scar,  
And this an oaken door shot with an oaken bar.

My Lord's men all are to the hunting gone,  
And all men else ; my women sleep in bower.  
And, sith are none here but we two alone,  
And none save them could ever scale our tower,  
I would not waste but use this little hour.  
All the world sleeps or else it rides afield.  
You may constrain me that have lesser power.  
What though I struggle ? I could at last but yield :  
Then, sweet, possess you my warm body, your own to  
wield."

What shall he say ? He says ; "'Tis my pure gain  
That one so lovely set my worth so high.  
Yet in my truer colours see me plain,  
I reach to no such reverence, dear, pardy.  
Yet by the high God I were fain to try  
My strength to serve and no occasion miss,  
While changing seasons and the years go by.  
To be your servant it were joy and bliss,  
And he were witless, sweet, that understood not this."

"The praise," saith she, "that men to women owe,  
I undervalue not nor hold it light.  
Trust me I were but little dainty so,  
To hold fair courteous dealing in despite,  
And gentle words of lady and of knight,  
But though I offend a little seeming too bold,  
A maid to win you dear to her delight,  
To comfort and drive hence her sorrows cold  
Might waive what else of wealth her treasure-houses  
hold.

I love that knight that is of so great fame  
That to the height of Heaven it doth aspire,  
The earth is grown too narrow for his name,  
And here he lies all wholly at my desire."  
But not her favour nor her lovely attire,  
Nor cheek nor chin could win him as she would,—  
He counters speech with speech, but without fire ;  
"Folly is all men give me by the Rood,  
Set beside one bright word of thine that knows but good."

"Oh Mary Mother, but otherwise say I !  
For were I worth all women in the land  
And wished to make my chaffer thriftily,  
Holding the wealth of nations like thin sand,  
Or wrought into one jewel to my hand,—  
Then for all I have heard and count for true,  
Here in your chamber would I take my stand  
To chaffer, know you not what I should do ?  
There should no knight on earth be chosen before you."

"I-wis," he said, "there's many a better man,  
Yet am I proud so highly to be priced,  
And in all faith, in all that ever I can,  
I am your servant and requite you Christ."  
One thought him potently from love enticed,  
The buffet waits to stretch him stark and cold,  
She might be fair indeed, but that sufficed.  
'Twas now mid-morn and past, then ; "Sweet, I am  
bold  
To take my leave," quoth she.—He did it not withhold.

She turned to go but with a glancing eye ;  
"Gawayne the knight it cannot be," said she.  
"Wherefore?" he asked and quickly made reply,  
Fearing he lacked some point of courtesy,  
But she resolved him, saying : "had it been he,  
Sure he had kissed her ere his lady past."  
"Lady at her commandment," answered he,  
But she upon the sudden, no whit downcast,  
Drew near and flung her arms about him and held him  
fast,

Knelt down and caught and kissed him passing fair . . .  
Then each commendeth other to Christ's grace,  
Then, without more ado, she left him there.  
He hastens him to rise and dress apace,  
That blithely and anon he may hear Mass,  
Thereafter to the presence to proceed  
Of those two dames, and to the dining-place,  
And then to dinner and hungrily to feed,—  
He calls his chamberlain and chooses him his weed.

And welcome did he find, that merry day,  
Betwixt the older and the younger dame,  
That courtly pair, for still with sport and play  
They sped the hour, much solace set those same,  
With mirth until the moon rose, and with game ;—  
And still by wooded heath and hillock brown,  
Plying his craft, that lord wherever he came  
Enwrought such havoc, they raised to his renown  
A pile to wonder at before the sun went down,

Of does and barren hinds and such like deer.  
Then fiercely flocked that folk in at the last,  
And of the quelled a quarry made them there  
Whereto the best men hied them and full fast,  
And first, the fattest upon one pile cast,  
In act to undo them, them they overhaul,  
And at the assay they searched them, some that past,  
And did aloud unto their fellows call  
They were two fingers fat—the thinnest of them all.

They slit the throats and seized the conduits then,  
(Sheared with the knife) and fast the free ends tied,  
They rip me up the limbs with little pain,  
And in a trice they rend me off the hide.  
To have the bowels they break the bellies wide,  
Then void them forth; anon the knot they raught.  
They gripped the gullet, and securely wried  
Weasand from windhole; then the guts they sought  
And threw them out, and with their sharp knives off  
they brought

The shoulders, by a cleft, with unbroke sides;  
They break the breast then, riving it in twain;  
Back to the gullet then, which one divides,—  
Right to the bight he rips it up amain,  
And voids the avaunters yarely from the slain,—  
The skirts o' th' ribs thereafter they unlaced,  
With method, to the haunch, which they distraign  
And heave it up all whole, when they uncased  
And cast the numbles forth, and with like dexterous haste

They lance the flaps behind the fork o' th' thigh,  
Then by the spine they hack the same in two,  
They cause the neck and trunk asunder fly,—  
They pierce the flanks which from the chine they hew,  
(While one into a copse the crows'-fee threw,)  
And by the fork's-hough hang them; plenty abounds,  
Each takes his fee; then bread with blood they embrue,  
While gall, paunch-leathers, lights, someone impounds,  
Upon a fell o' th' fair beast to feed their hounds.

Men blow the Prys, and loud they bay, the hounds,  
Obtain their flesh, and then all homeward hie,  
And many a lusty note that eve abounds,  
And blast of horn, and that whole company  
Reach their fair castle as the day doth die;  
There sits Gawayne full tranquilly in stall,—  
Anon the lord makes entry merrily,  
And by the bright fire kindled in the hall  
He and the gay knight greet and pleasure comes at  
call.

With many a careless and trim-coated page,  
The ladies soon descend by the broad stair  
With all their maids. The lord bids clear a stage,  
And to bring in from out the frosty air  
And to set down his goodly beasts and fair.  
He points to their tails and, loud that all may hear,  
He cries: "Have I won thanks that spend such care?  
All this is thine by covenant full clear."  
"I thank you," cries Gawayne, "for not this seven long  
year

In winter have I seen so big a prize !  
And this is my gift with the like good will.  
Such things for us at home the times devise,  
And we no less our covenants fulfil."

Then is the talking and the laughter still,—  
"What hath Gawayne, what hath he hid in store ?"  
"I won this fairly, as by holt and hill

You won your hinds," speaking he crossed the floor  
And kissed the lord full fair, "'tis your's even were it  
more !"

Then was loud laughter in the tap'stry hall  
That every oaken rafter rang of it.

"But," cries the lord, "how did this thing befall,  
And how won, say you, was it by your wit ?"

"Nay," cries the knight, "I cannot find that writ,  
It is not compact, seek no more as yet."

Then to the chimney do they go to sit  
Where at the supper all the house is met,

With rare wines borne in cups and newest dishes set.

And ofttimes in their mirth they make accord  
To hold the like compact the morrow morn ;  
Gawayne at home and overland the lord  
By field and fold with horse and hunter's horn.

Then the bright liquor is towards them borne  
To drink the pledge ; "what thing the morn supplies  
Of new to change." And now night comes forlorn ;

They greet the unsought sleep with heavy eyes,  
And leave the hall to shadows and a fire that dies.

Thrice doth the cock his matin bugle blow  
Ere that lord leaps from bed to quit the place.  
Mass over and the meat, away they go  
A little ere day sprang, dressed to the chase,  
They pass by the high towers the open space  
With mickle blowing of the merry horn.  
The hounds that through the woods must run their  
    race,  
Mighty and fleet, beneath a bush of thorn  
They loose where a great crag shoots up beside the bourne.

The hunt cheer loudly, and the brawling pack,  
Forty at once, unto the trail fall straight.  
Crag, valley, dale and hill give answer back,  
Hounds bay, horns blare, rocks ring, that beast to bate.  
There stood, from the steep height fall'n sheer of late,  
A mound grown wild with rank copse round about.  
Well know the keepers who there lies in wait,  
And while they beat the bushes, all that rout,  
Those with the bloodhounds swear that they will have  
    him out.

Then out he rushed, there is no more to say,  
And flung three men to ground, and forth is gone,—  
A fell wild-boar that, gone is many a day,  
Had quit the others to harbour there alone,  
—A beast unblithely met by stock or stone,—  
They sound recheat and after drive pell-mell,  
But where he turned there's many a man may groan,  
Thrown to the earth, yet they entreat him well,  
Riders, horses, and hounds full brave that beast to quell.



Ofttimes he makes a stand with vicious eyes,  
Then the wood quakes to hear the hunters' "Hay"!  
But piteous are to hear the bloodhounds' cries  
Torn by wight so savage and at bay,—  
Yet when the bowmen draw he dares not stay,  
—Though all their strength of arm cuts not his hide,  
Which is so rough it sends to splinters grey  
Whatever strikes it,—yet he starts aside,  
And wounds both horse and hound and many a man  
beside,

For when he felt the shrewd and bitter stroke,  
He waxed all mad for battle and debate,  
Forth from his jaws the yellow torrent broke,  
Then many ran from him that chased him late.  
The lord on his light horse but laughed thereat,  
And lances after and doth his bugle blow  
Right through the brushwood where the beast doth  
bate,  
The other follow sith the one dare go,  
And chide their fierce wild swine until the sun is low.

This while within Sir Gawayne lies abed,  
Yet travel-wearied, but in richest gear.  
The lady woke, she kept no sleepy head,  
But in his chamber lovely gan appear,  
And draws back from his bed the curtains clear.  
"I muse," said she, "if you are ever so,  
The courteous customs that I teach you, dear,  
It seems you do so little care to know  
That what you learned yestreen to-day away you throw.

I taught you, though you have forgotten, sweet,  
One the most truest token I have known."

"What, for I know not, have I said unmeet?

If you speak true the blame is all my own."

(She sits beside him now, this twain alone.)

"What said? 'Las! what not done! I taught you this;  
Where a delightsome countenance is shown,  
The knight adventurous will claim a kiss,  
And this becomes him well, such privilege is his."

"Call back," he says, "my dear, that speech of thine,  
For what if he did this and were denied?

Fairly to him she might nowise incline."

"What fears he?" saith she, "having on his side  
Strength to constrain with loveliness allied,  
Were she so currish to deny him still."

He says, "Your fair speech, lady, is my pride,  
But gifts, men say, the givers' selves do spill,  
And gifts are gifts no more, lacking the givers' will."

But, lady, use me ever at your good will,  
I am your knight to kiss in any place."  
Therewith the lady leans down soft and still,  
And very comely kisses his fair face.  
Of loves despised and lovers' winning grace  
They spake much matter. "I would learn," quoth  
she,  
"Wherefore it falls, would you resolve the case,  
That active men and full of courtesy,  
And bred unto the trade of arms, men such as ye

In whose works both the title and the text  
It is of toils endured for their mistréss,  
(They jeopardise their lives in battle vexed  
To win her love, and for no matter less,  
Or long enduring hardship and distress,  
At last avenging her they cool her care,—  
And their reward of labour her caress);—  
But you whose name and fame walk everywhere,  
Give not the poorest little word away to bear

Of anything pertaining unto love ;  
But, if unskilled, how got you such high praise ?  
Then come I seeking you to learn thereof,  
And with you have I sat these two dull days,—  
For though my lord was far on foreign ways  
Chasing his harts, I had no mirth nor game.  
Then guide a youngling through this crafty maze,  
Or I shall hold, and that were worthy blame,  
You hold I am too senseless-dull to learn that same."

"My silence was a thousand leagues away  
From thinking so," cries he. "'Tis pure delight  
When with whatever cheer thoughtful or gay,  
You kill an hour in playing with your knight.  
Of love I spake not for it passed my might,  
For how should I turn scholar and expound  
To you that in such practise have more sleight  
And in such craft more deeply do abound  
Than I shall ever in life with high horse overground?"

But truly your poor student I would be.”  
Thus parries that gay knight with quick defence.  
To work him woe long time essayeth she,  
But no word fit for blame she draweth thence,  
/ For Gawayne was so clean from all offence,  
/ Courteous and noble. Fairly then ends this.  
The Mass bell rings, she must be parted hence,  
Or be known absent ; once more doth she kiss,  
Then leaves her knight full slow and wends her way, I-wis.

The lord this while is faren over land,  
To drive his swine with blood-hounds by the brae,  
Who cruel bites their backs at every stand  
Till low in dirt and trodden mire they lay.  
Then come the bowmen driving him away,  
Spite of his teeth with yellow arrows flying.  
Then he takes water, and to bide his bay,  
Swims to the mid-stream where a crag is lying,  
And gains his den forspent, the echo round him dying.

He sets his back unto the hollow stone  
And scrapes the flints and hideous clamour makes.  
He sets aloft his bristles up each one,  
While from his jaw the foam in fury breaks  
Which the wind catching, tosses thence in flakes.  
He whets his tusks, fit monster for a dream,  
And all men hold them far for their lives' sakes,—  
The lord that God nor devil did esteem  
Alone leaps from his horse and wades into the stream.

The silence falls on those beside the brook  
Who tremble for his life, watching afar,  
They count the moments and dare scarcely look  
Upon the water, a diminishing bar.  
His flourished brand they saw bright as a star,—  
Then the boar sprang and water o'er them spread,  
But he has marked him nobly at that jar,  
And through the belly drove it to the head,  
The boar went swiftly down the water so well he sped.

Hounds bayed, men shouted and the horns blew clear—  
Then an old huntsman, learned of long date,  
Draws from his belt a sharp knife and a sheer,  
And rips me up this fellow, dead by fate,  
And all this matter shortly to relate,  
They lash the feet to a stout pole and strong,  
But the huge head with pomp and mickle state  
They mount in triumph to be borne along,—  
Then with no small content they quit the wood with  
song.

He thinks time lagging till at twilight-fall  
He sets the boar beneath his roof ; he said :—  
“Mark well the girth of him, then praise us all,  
We woodmen that so thriftily have sped.  
We forced this fellow's hold, through the woods he  
fled,  
At rout I slew the great, the big of brawn.”  
They handle in amaze the heavy head  
That in the woods deftly away was shorn,  
“A boar the greatest of the world,” they will be sworn.

“And flesh and fell, Gawayne, he is your own  
By our fast compact faithfully and true.”

“I grant it sooth, nor need you give alone  
For I have yet wherewith to change with you.”  
Then twice he kisses him, thus true men do,  
Quit all oaths sworn at fall of eventide.

“St. Giles !” the host cries, “never yet I knew  
A better man at chaffer, far and wide,  
Men may grow rich apace, the country where you bide !”

Laughing he speaks, the while the boards aloft,  
Laid on the trestles and fair covered all,  
Await but supper. Then lights waken soft,  
And waxen torches glimmer by the wall,  
And mirth and glee ring loud through oaken hall,  
And supper done, the minstrels close the day  
With Christmas songs and notes that gaily fall,  
Nor yet the lady ceased her amorous play,  
For where Gawayne was found she was not found away.

But all the time she did so look and glance  
Beneath her lashes, that he wondering,  
Was only wroth that so these things should chance,  
But though she strives long time to wrest the thing,  
He makes her in return no proffering,  
Yet lacked no courtesy at first or last.  
And now the minstrels play no more nor sing,  
And all to the red chimney forth are passed,  
Where a new compact for the morn the host has cast.

But Gawayne craves his leave for parting thence,  
For that his term is all too nigh at hand.  
"Why?" cries the host, "Is it so far from hence?  
And anyone can show thee overland  
Where thou may'st end this matter out of hand.  
Thou shalt, ere prime, I swear, achieve thy quest.  
Our pact is struck, besides, that understand,  
And thou art proved true twice," he cries in jest,  
"To-morrow is the third time and shall be the best,

And I shall hunt afar these frosty woods,  
And when we meet with evening in this hall  
We will anew make proffer of our goods,  
If with good hap the morning shall befall."  
And this grants Gawayne and agrees to all.  
"Sith you forbear one day to seek your ill,  
Here lie and rest and think of joy withal,  
When it is found then take of joy your fill  
For sorrow takes the man at any hour she will."

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The Mass is sung to end, the pages wait  
The guests' arrival and upon them pressed  
The sops in goblets, while to the main gate  
The serving-men bring coursers of the best,  
For all that troop is to the hunting dressed;  
Brisk is the earth with frost on stock and stone,  
And the great steeds impatient of arrest,  
And as with joy departed is each one,  
Out of his cloud-rack ruddy rose the mighty sun.

When they had ridden to the greenwood side  
The hounds of their long leashes free they cast.  
A traverse way athwart the wood they ride,  
And through the horns they blow a rousing blast.  
A little hound that by a thorn-bush passed  
Shrilly gives tongue, his fellows answer back,  
The huntsmen cheer, the rabble fall in fast,  
Hounds swift and lithe follow the fox's track  
As forth by many a difficult grove he leads the pack.

He swerves, he backs, he doubles, oft he crept  
Beneath some sharp hedge, marking far away  
How fast drew on the hunt, then quick he leapt  
Over a spinney, leading them astray,  
And scaped the forest, and had won the day  
But that a beater's hut was stationed there,  
Wherefrom three fierce ones ran at him all grey.  
So to the woods again poor wretch in care,  
With all the woe in life and courage of despair.

Then was it very bliss to hear the hounds  
When all the pack had view of him together,—  
Such outcry for his head, as from their bounds  
The clambering cliffs had clattered altogether,  
No gambler on his life would stake a feather,—  
Full loud they holloaed when they came at him  
And, "thief! thief!" cried, and in the greenwood  
tether,  
Those tattlers at his tail with eyen grim  
Hem him lest out again he dart from forest dim.



By hollow, by hill, he leads them, over, under,  
He muddied well that stout lord and his train,  
He twists, he twines, lest he be torn asunder,  
And far he flies and sly creeps back again. . . .  
But within curtains doth the knight remain  
All that cold morn asleep so wholesomely ;  
Not so the lady, thinking upon Gawayne,  
Love keeps her waking ; stealthily drew she nigh,  
Nor suffered her fixed purpose from her heart to fly.

Her merry mantle falls with many a fold,  
Furred all with costliest furs so fair and clean,  
She wore not on her head the heavy gold  
But well-set jewels, like the stars for sheen,  
Clustered by twenties in her locks I ween,  
And breast and back she bared for more delight,  
And shot the heavy bolt the hasps between,  
And flung the lattice wide where day sprang bright,  
Then with her merry words she woke the sleeping  
knight,—

“Lo how thou sleep’st upon so clear a day !”  
He lay in the dry drooping of a dream ;—  
No more debate ! he taketh the right way,  
And how the chapel all horror doth beteen,  
He greets the Green Man, grisly doth he seem,  
And stern he bides the buffet at the tryst—  
But, as she spake against the morning beam,  
He answered, and the lady as she list,  
Leans over his fair face and him she featly kissed.

She welcomes him and makes him so glad cheer,  
That was so glorious in so gay attire,  
Faultless of feature and of colour clear,  
That very bliss doth set him all afire.  
Good words they spake, and in glad time aspire  
To bliss and playful dealing in accord,  
And ever with the hour is danger nigher  
Lest in the game the present times afford  
She may forget a-hunting she hath left her lord,

For this fair knight so hotly she beset,  
And of her love made show so plenteously,  
That either he must pay again the debt,  
As every traitor to that hostelry,  
Or make denial with foul discourtesy,  
Wherefore this tale of her's and fair behest,  
And all that tends to love in specialty  
He sets aside, as it were done in jest,  
“Nay, Sweet,” quoth she, “give heed unto my poor  
request.

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Of all that live the most to blame you are  
If you can love not her who lies by you  
Above all women wounded to the heart !  
Have you some other leman of fairer hue  
With sweeter lips and eyes of lovelier blue,  
Holds she your faith so fast, this fairer one,  
—For that there is one such I hold it true,—”  
“Nay,” cries the laughing knight, “for by St. John  
I know none, nor as at this time, I would know none.”

“That is a word the most unkind of all,  
Answered with answers that are ill to hear !  
But kiss me once and I take leave withal,  
This one time only, nothing is to fear.”  
And she bent over him and kissed him there.  
“I can but mourn as this wide earth I rove,  
But at this parting one gift give me, dear,  
Though all so little a thing as but thy glove,  
By this to think on thee and looking ease my love.”

And he made answer, “I were then most glad  
Having such gifts as princes have in store,  
Samite and sendal would to God I had,  
And sprightly jewels, these thou should'st tell o'er  
And choose the rarest, worthy still of more,  
But, lady loveliest, take it not in pain,  
You know me voyaging an unknown shore,  
No brave delightful things borne in my train,  
And gloves—that were a wretched giving for Gawayne !”

She reached him then a ring, a toy full proud,  
Whereon was set a ruby thence to stare,  
Like to a sun half-hid in golden cloud,  
With dazzling shine melting the shady air.  
This did she proffer him with speeches fair,  
A thing of value huge in show, pardie,  
But yet he granted not her ring to wear,  
But makes his answer ; “Hostess mine, let be ;  
I will have naught of you sith you had naught of me.”

"If you deny to have my ring," quoth she,  
"Lest you a guest should be too highly graced  
And would not thus beholden to me be  
For precious things, have this," and she unlaced,  
Wrought of green silk, with gold-work well enchased,  
Warm with the clinging to her body white,  
The slender ribbon from beside her waist,  
Broidered with fingers, pleasant to the sight,  
This she besought him take and wear and be her  
knight.

"Have this, though worthless, sith you will no more."  
But the knight answered, "Never in no case  
Treasure nor gift he might not have before  
He met his counter at the trysting-place,  
To win his chance, thereto God send him grace."  
She urges him, he set her gift aside,  
"But, lady, wear no sorrow in your face,  
I am your servant truly and with pride  
Serve you through hot or cold wherever I may ride."

"Do you deny my gift," the lady said,  
"For that so simple it appear in show?  
Lo, to the sight 'tis but a little thread,  
But for it's virtue other far than so,  
Learn then to judge aright and truly know  
Who girds him in this ribbon, from that while,  
Under Heaven's height he need not fear a foe,  
Nor point, nor edge, nor bloody wounds and vile,  
Nor craft nor sleight at all of no enchanter's wile."

Then he accepted it full fair and free,  
For casting in his mind it seemed clear gain,  
A jewel for the morrow's jeopardy,  
"For by this sleight," thought he, "to scape unslain  
After long toiling and incessant pain  
Were pleasant end." She gave all with good-will,  
And prays that none may know it but they twain,  
And this her wish he granted to fulfil,  
Then the third time she kissed him and went forth full  
still.

So has she taken leave and left him there,  
For more of that man's love she might not win.  
Then rose Gawayne and hid the lace with care  
There where he hopes again to find it in  
A privy place, and calls his chamberlain,  
Who brings his sprightliest weeds against that day ;  
So to the chapel, and the priest within  
Bids shrive and teach him to the better way,  
He sets him all as clean as if for Judgement Day.

Then he makes merry with that ancient wife  
And with that lovesome, with all manner joy,  
That was the merriest day of his whole life,  
He jests with all that castle doth employ,  
And it was said alike of man and boy,  
"We saw him not so merry till that tide."  
There leave we him for with, "Holla ! Abloy !"  
Through fields abroad full fast the huntsmen ride  
And through a thicket dash ; the fox runs there beside.

They met him coming through a full rough grove  
With all the rabble right upon his heel.  
With whip and spur forward that lord doth shove,  
Draws from his scabbard his brand, about doth wheel,  
Brandished and flung it, stark doth Reynard reel,  
Scaped it, and thought to start back through the crowd,  
But fleeter is a hound his death to deal,  
All at the horses' feet, thick as a cloud,  
They worry me this cunning fellow snarling loud.

Nimbly adown to earth doth that lord light,  
And caught and overhead bore high his prey,  
Thither the nearer huntsmen speed aright,  
To mark the brave hounds all aloud that bay,  
Faint the recheat is sounded far away  
Till gathered is that company all whole  
Whose loud hallooing closes up the day,  
While all that ever bore bugle blows his dole,  
So merry do they raise the Mass for Reynard's soul.

They stroke their gallant hounds and fee them well  
Then turn back home tearing off Reynard's coat,  
The purple twilight gathers in the dell,  
Their mighty horns they blow with lusty throat  
Full stoutly, so they come by ditch and moat,  
And find a great fire on the floor agood,  
And Gawayne and that company of note,—  
His blue robes trail to ground right as they should,  
Brave is his furred surcoat and noble hangs his hood.

And he makes answer, saying, all in game,  
"Sir Host, fulfil we now our compact right  
Which being left undone deserveth blame,  
Even that same treaty stricken yesternight  
Where lacked no drink," then fairly in mens' sight  
Thrice kissed he him so gravely as he may.  
"By Christ ! a goodly bargain !" cries that wight,  
"Gave ye as good for what ye took to-day ?"  
"Enough," cries Sir Gawayne, "if what I owe I pay."

"Herein," the other cries, "I am behind,  
For though we chased agood while we had light,  
Save this foul fox-skin nothing could we find,  
—May the Fiend have the goods and take his flight !  
For such a quarry is a thing too slight  
To change against three kisses all so good."  
Yet had Gawayne the love-lace hid from sight,  
And says but thus : "I thank you by the Rood."  
Then the whole story of that hunt in joyous mood

They tell him, ere with meat and minstrelsy  
They make them merry at the banqueting,  
And drive the sullen time away, perdy,  
With ladies' laughter light, with gay jesting,  
With wine, with mirth, with many a pleasant thing,  
Till servingmen with torches burning bright  
Lighten that host and all to chambers bring,  
Then for his sojourn Gawayne thanks that knight ;  
"The honour due to you may the High King requite,

For me I rest your servant faithfully.—  
But hearken, host, I go hence ere the morn,  
And therefore now a fellow lend to me  
To guide my ways, though wild, to that drear bourne,  
Goal of my wanderings all, Chapel forlorn,  
To embrace the doom of God ere joyous day  
Laugh in her east.” “That,” said he, “I have sworn,  
And evermore in all things else obey,”  
And then the fellow he assigns to point the way,

By weald and waste the tracks least intricate ;  
He shall not toil at crossing of the stream,  
Nor at the tangled copse in doubt abate  
His ways, so high that hostel doth esteem  
The guests’ well-faring ; ere the morning-beam  
He shall away full early on the road,  
And their cold sighing doth them well beseem,  
That court and ladies all that there abode,  
Who kissed him fairly fain commending him to God.

So has he left them and to each man met,  
That with his diverse toils had served him, said  
Fair words at parting ; torches high are set  
And twinkling tapers lighten him to bed,—  
That the warm sleep, though kingly canopied,  
Bring him to harbour out of billowy thought  
I dare not say ; he has within his head  
Matter to muse on in the blow he sought.  
Bide yet a little,—I will tell you how they wrought.

HERE ENDETH THE THIRD BOOK.



## BOOK IV.

Some matter of the Host of the Castle and of his Wife that loved Gawayne ; and of the Varlet which led Gawayne to the Tryst of the Green Chapel ; with the manner of his Encounter with the Green Knight and the End of this Enquest.

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By this it was the last watch of the night.  
Then at the word of God the morning woke,  
And charged the dark and overthrew him quite.  
Wild weather in the world with tempest broke.  
What shall he now that lacketh shoes and cloak,  
When the furred coats of beasts the sleet soaks through ?  
The driving snow doth stream and valley choke,  
And loud about his towers the great winds blew,  
And Gawayne lay and hearkened every cock that crew.

His eyes were closed, but little did he sleep.  
Then quickly up he rose, where by the wall  
A little lamp kept watch in darkness deep.  
His chamberlain awakening to his call  
Bestirs him and, as fitly doth befall,  
After a great wise fashions his array,  
A crafty garb he meets the cold withal,—  
His harness-rings, the red rust rubbed away,  
Shine like a running brook upon a morn of May.

No freshlier looked Gawayne when first he rode  
From Camelot ; his plates picked clean each piece.  
He calls for Gringalet from his abode  
And from the stables yarely they release  
I trow the gayest horse from here to Greece.  
The knight himself does on his noblest trim,  
To search the velvet out he doth not cease,  
And his coat-jewels like a starlight dim,  
Shone in the grey of morn and that was well with him.

For should I tell the garments that he wore,  
His coat of the proud velvet furred and brave,  
Was with the clear stones broidered over and o'er.  
Merry and bright the gems and good to have,  
For the wrought seams the craftsmen did not save  
The broidered curious work, for greater pride  
The underface was furred, and that she gave,  
The lady, he forgot not at that tide,  
But knit it by his body ere he garbed to ride.

—He wore it neither for the red nor green,  
Nor for its pendants of the gold full clear,  
For its rare grace, the like was never seen,  
But only for that life he held full dear  
And would prolong it with a charm to wear,  
As any would that loved the stars and sun.  
Now Gringalet full restive gan appear.  
By this Gawayne his bright brand belted on  
And gives that folk farewell that throngs to the stairs of  
stone..

Then garb they the great Gringalet likewise,  
—The proud one would away in air so cold,—  
Then soberly he spake in seemly guise ;—  
“There is a folk within this castle hold  
That think on honour, may all joy enfold  
Them and their lady and lord by night and day,  
And by good men it shall be often told,  
‘They cherished those who wandered by the way,’  
And truly if I live somewhat I will repay.”

Then with his shoe he strikes the mounting-steel  
And strides aloft ; his bright shield bravely shone ;  
He girds at Gringalet with golden heel,  
Who at that bidding starts upon the stone,—  
The bridge is down, the gates full wide are thrown,  
The steeds abide no more with hooves to prance,  
But ere the knight beyond the pale is gone,—  
“God give,” he cries, “this castle aye good chance !”  
So parts he, with the youth who bears him spear and  
lance.

The porter, kneeling, cries unto the knight,—  
“Sir Gawayne, God you save !” then from that folk  
He and the youth departed are full light  
Beneath the naked boughs of ash and oak.  
Beyond their banks the torrents boiled and broke,  
And damps and vapours choke the path they tread,  
Each mountain had of mist a hat and cloak, {  
And lonely by the wood that wild way led,  
And in the cloudy rack the sun withholds his head,

He doth disdain the hour and will abide.  
They breathe their horses on a hill full high  
And mark the desolate snows on every side.  
And now the youth, halting his master by,  
Bespeaks him ; " Here a man can see with eye  
The Chapel bounds, but truly in this case,  
There is another way, I will not lie,  
Work by my wit, and if God grant us grace,  
We may yet fly full fleet and scape this perilous place.

Though I offend, I say it but for love,  
I would not meet the ruler of this waste  
For anything on earth, by God above !  
That giant of this middle earth, encased  
In his stiff irons, is no man to be faced  
By any four knights of King Arthur's court.  
See, here beyond the dale his home is placed,  
And he is pitiless, from that resort  
There's neither monk nor mass-priest bringeth us report,

Chaplain nor churl nor any living wight.  
He slayeth all alike by the hard hand  
And for that butchery he counts it light  
As to go clean himself from wound of brand,  
And truly as you ride and go on land,  
Though you had twenty lives to fling away,  
May the knight hearken, you are overmanned.  
The mischief he hath brewed ! Yet day by day  
There's none can worst him, then by the great God I say,

Good Sir Gawayne, seek out some other track,  
Whereso you will, and Christ be your good speed !  
And look you now, for me, I will ride back  
And swear you held right on with haste and heed.  
By all the saints whom He found good indeed  
I shall keep faith, by God and by the Rood !  
And tell no tale but prove true friend in need ! ”  
“ For thy good faith, friend, keep it I think thou would,  
And may good luck be his who thinks to do me good.

Thou would'st be secret I believe it well,  
But werst thou never so secret nor so fast  
I were not less a coward though none should tell :  
Therefore go I. Lo, how thou look'st aghast !  
I say ere one hour be away and passed  
I will be there, though he were a stern knave,  
As the fate drives so fare we at the last,  
Though he be mighty and foul, armed with a stave,  
Yet God can work full well his servants' lives to save.”

“ Marry, sith death thou'lt have, the road is clear,  
Thou with thy talking have it thine own way,  
I stay thee not but I'll not linger here.  
Have now thy spear of me in rest to lay,  
Thy helm eke,—for the road 'tis as I say,  
Boar-like he holds the bottom of this cleft,  
Where he will tell a tale without delay  
That thou shalt hearken ; bear unto the left,  
The clearing in the coombe. Farewell of life bereft,

For here, Sir Knight, we twain part company,  
I am no longer of thy fellowship  
Though all the gold on earth should be my fee !”  
He turns about and softly away doth slip  
Threading the forest, and by holt and dip,  
Strikes with his heels and left him all alone.  
“By God’s self,” cries Gawayne, with steady lip,  
“I am full ready, I will not weep nor groan,—  
Still will I look to God riding by stock and stone.”

With that he strikes his heels into the steed,  
And drives him downward deep into the dale  
By the wild wood side and at his topmost speed.  
A savage place, he thought, the abode of bale.  
Harbour he sees none yet, clearing, nor pale,  
Only on each side knuckled crags that spring  
Beside that uncouth and forbidding vale,  
Rough rocks enow and shadows menacing  
Whereat he oft changed cheer to see it so foul looking.

Then he drew up his great steed at that tide  
And looked about, and saw by his left hand,  
Anigh a green bank by a river-side,  
A round knoll in a clearing of the land,  
That cunningly beside a ford was planned.  
Here he lights down, full grim and hastily,  
And fixed his bridle where the flung spray fanned  
The rough boughs of a blackened linden-tree,  
Debating doubtfully if that the place might be.

Nearer he draws to pass it and repass.  
Much like a cave or crevice was that knoll,  
And all about it grew the lank knot-grass.  
Of size to admit a man there was an hole,  
And all that place was hollow as a bowl.  
“Is this the Chapel?” said the gentle knight,  
“Yea God, at midnight when the skies are foul,  
The Devil might tell his matins in good plight  
In such a waste as this with not much moon in sight.

Yea God, this oratory is ill-beseen,  
All herb-o’ergrown so foully as it lies,  
It falls but fit this fellow in the green  
Should deal devotion here in devil-wise.  
I feel it is the fiend who with his lies  
Hath lured me to this chapel of mischance,  
This cursed kirk, to slay me in some guise,  
Foul may it fall and low!” Then with high lance,  
And helm whereon the frosty light doth play and glance,

He strides thereto. Then loud o’er hill and plain  
Rings out a sound, a wondrous and unblithe,  
Grating as it should rend the cliff in twain,  
Like, but for loudness thereof not a tithe,  
As men upon a grindstone ground a scythe.  
Louder it roars and rushes on the ear  
Like waters at the mill that twist and writhe,  
And, “by God,” thinks Gawayne, “I trow that gear  
Prepares for this same wizard who shall meet me here,

Yet the mere sound shall never terrify,  
And so God's will be done," this is his gist,  
And he advanced then, calling clear and high ;  
" With shield and spear and gauntlets to his wrist,  
Here bides Gawayne, who waits to give him tryst ?  
If one here seek the meeting that he gave  
Now come or never for the hour is missed ! "  
" Abide," cries one above him the cave,  
" Thou shalt have all in haste I promised thee to have ! "

Yet rapid for a space, with rush and whirr,  
The whetting grateth, then he comes to light,  
Fell from his hollow hill. He doth not stir,  
Gawayne, but stone-still watches the green knight  
Come by his crag, for a span broad and bright,  
Within his right hand, worthy to be feared,  
He bears of steel a Danish axe new-dight,  
Which to a cunning edge the files have sheared,—  
Thus stands he with like looks, like locks, like bushy beard,

As when most strange he rode at Arthur's feast.  
Only he lacks his steed, and his gaunt bones  
He resteth on his axe, so on he pressed  
And reaching where the water sobs and moans,  
He bideth not to seek for stepping-stones,  
But leaps it with his axe, no more but so.  
" Thou can'st keep tryst ! " and rattling to his tones  
The echoes speak. Gawayne bows nothing low,  
And on all sides about him lies the desolate snow.



“God keep thee, Gawayne, and God grant thee grace,  
Thou holdest compact ; cleanly it hath stood  
This twelvemonth ; welcome, warrior, to my place  
Who time’st thy travel as a true man should.  
Now are we two alone, and by my hood,  
None like to part us in this valley deep,—  
Have off thy helm and sith few words are good,  
Do of this thing no further comment keep  
Than erst did I when straightway and at one fell sweep

This head of mine thou struck’st off to the ground.”  
And Gawayne answered, “Ay, that gives me heart,  
I grudge thee nothing. At this river bound  
I stand to take as ready as thou art  
To render, neither do I move nor start.”  
His semblance bearing no thought of affright,  
Seemly he bears his head, in every part  
Laying his long locks by. Then to a height  
The other heaves his weapon with a great feint of might.

Him had he stricken, he had then left Gawayne  
No better than the earth where he lay bleeding,  
By such gross weight of metal cloven in twain,—  
But at its flash and at no other pleading  
He shrank a little, the load of steel receding  
Sparkles the flints. The other calls aloud ;  
“Lost to all worth, art thou then so unheeding  
Of name and fame, Gawayne, the noble and proud ?  
Men said that never yet by no hill under cloud,

Nor any dale thou went'st aghast for fear,  
And now he shakes before the buffet fall !  
Who is this fellow ? Never did I hear  
Of Gawayne cowardice ! Flinched I at all ?  
Did I raise tumults ? No, in Arthur's hall  
This head of mine struck earth where all men stood !  
Thus am I grown the greater, men shall call  
Gawayne no more, ' the noble,' and ' the good '."  
The knight cries ; " I swerved once, but by the Holy  
Rood,

So will I now no more, wherefore apace !  
Deal me the destiny for which I came  
And bring me to the proof. Here in thy place  
I stand, abating nothing of thy claim,—  
But dream not thus to purchase greater fame ;  
For hark, if my head roll upon the plain,  
Not being the Devil can I mend the same ?"  
" Have at thee then ! " cries the other and amain  
He heaves his axe as though to shiver bone and brain,

Yet even in striking he withholds the blow,  
Staying it as it falls, that nothing boots.  
Prepared, Gawayne abideth in the snow,  
Fast as an oak-tree with an hundred roots,  
Then hears he that gay voice that evilly suits  
The grisly tenor of the speech ; " Now like  
Gawayne thou stand'st, and no man more imputes  
Terror to thee, but yet thy hood up-pick,  
Haply 'twill cover thy neck when I the buffet strike."

Then to him furiously returns Gawayne ;  
" Thrash on, bold warrior, thou who threaten'st long,  
For now I deem it neither idle nor vain  
To think thine heart but weak that was so strong  
And never to be shook ! " " Therein thou art wrong,"  
The other cries, " and have thy reckoning now ! "  
He gnaws his lip in knotting up the thong  
Of blade and blade-shaft, puckering his deep brow,—  
He hath small need to love him that beneath the bough

Lonely abides the swinging of the axe.  
Beside the neck the other lets it bite,—  
Like mad he hammered yet it fell but lax,  
He severed but the skin. 'Twas sad in sight  
To see the scarlet gleam upon the white,  
But Gawayne, as a man that slips a gyve,  
A spear's-length and a span leaps in delight—  
To feel and trust and know himself alive.  
Never sith he was born did utter joy so strive

Within him, blissful may he sing and dance !  
His shield he catches from the thorny spray  
Whereon it hangs, his helmet and his lance,  
And cries in arms, " Bid no more blows to-day !  
One single stroke, as no man will gainsay,  
Concludes the compact, erewhile shaped right so,—  
Then for a blow a blow I will repay,  
And (trust me) fiercely, speak then, ay or no  
If thou resist or fighting tender blow for blow ? "

Herewith the green knight holding back a space,  
His perilous axe-haft leant unto the ground,  
Looks upon Gawayne, how within that place  
Dreadless he stands in arms and safe and sound,—  
Armed head to heel,—Sir Gawayne the renowned.  
The other liked that, bellowing boisterously,  
His voice a very tempest of deep sound,  
“Wherefore so fierce of face, Knight?” crieth he,  
“There is no man on earth that hath mishandled thee,

Nor done aught mannerless, but only so  
As at King’s court and worthily was shaped.  
I promised and I proffered thee a blow  
And thou hast had it, happy having scaped  
All claims beside,—if twice I feigned and japed,  
Yet the third time I might in honesty  
Have stricken thee a blow that wider gaped,  
For twice erewhile thou dealed’st faithfully,  
But the third time what then? Thou can’st it not deny

It is my weed thou hast about thy waist,  
A girdle woven of my lady’s woof.  
My trust in thee not evilly was placed  
The first time and the second, and the proof  
Those kisses given beneath my castle roof  
When I returned from hunting where I rode,—  
But on the third night to your own behoof  
You kept back half, that girdle that you owed,  
And on a compact broken quitted my abode.

For those two nights I feinted, without scathe,  
And for the third night thou hast had thy pay,—  
'When true man truly gives,' the proverb saith,  
'No ill to him befalls.' I know, I say,  
Thy converse and the kisses of each day,  
My lady's wooing and all else beside ;  
Small wonder, for I wrought it everyway,  
As is my wont with knights that hither ride,  
Of whom I slew great plenty that did with me abide.

I sent her to assay thee and I find  
Thou art the rose of princes without peer,  
For so thou dost excel unto my mind  
All knights beside, as truly fair and clear ;  
A princely pearl that had by chance come there  
With white peas in a bushel, more delights  
Than they, and doth more lustrously appear,—  
Men count it for a trove in their despites,  
So doth the gay Gawayne excel all earthly knights.

But here a little you lacked for loyalty,  
But sith for love of life the less your blame ;  
Had it been amorous work wrought covertly  
Of wooing my wife, 'twere slaughter to your fame ;  
But unassailed my lady went and came,  
Her gift a charm, no love-gift last or first,"—  
But Gawayne hears not, only in his hot shame  
Even to his yellow hair the red blood burst,  
"Be avarice," he cries, "and be thou, cowardice,  
accursed !

In you is vice that virtue doth betray,  
And villany." He thrusteth in his hand  
And from his body plucks the lace away,  
And casts it to that Lord on snowy land.  
"This thing is with my sorrows wrought and planned,  
This wizardry bade fear with avarice  
Conspire to thrust me from that glorious band  
That generous freedom love and count it bliss,  
And loyalty,—judge then what wealth I have in this.

Oh, treachery and untruth, through you come sorrow,  
And bitter grief to men and biting care.  
And though we walk more warely on the morrow,  
This grief is our's to-day." His deep despair  
The green man breaks through, for with merrier air,  
"Confession," quoth he, "putteth all to rights,  
And what hurt have I? Truly I am bare  
Of any. Take this girdle of delights,  
A keepsake from the encounter of two chivalrous knights!

I hold thee utterly confessed and clean,  
Have then my girdle with his hasps of gold,  
Look on his hue, the brightest ever seen,  
As green as ever my gown, and then be bold  
By this to mind a story long since told,  
When you ride forth with captains of the best,  
Of this same Chapel by the waters cold.  
And sith as now but little time doth rest,  
Revel away with me the remnant of this feast.

With your old enemy," laughing loud he cries,  
"Accord you, come, y'are welcome I you tell!"  
"May He reward you fair," Gawayne replies,  
"That is the Ruler both of dale and fell.  
For me I sojourn sadly by your dell,  
And tarry but unhappy by your hall  
Commend me to mine honoured lady well,  
And to mine other honoured ladies all  
That with their sleights so cunningly their guest made  
fall.

Fool that I was! But though far less than those,  
The great of old time, tricked with womens' wile,  
With them I stand; Adam in garden-close,  
And David whom Barsabe led with guile,  
And Samson, whom she overreached a mile  
Who shore his locks, he may awaken loath!  
And Solomon the King, whom they erewhile  
So wasted that his wisdom slept in sloth,—  
God, that man might at once both love and distrust both!

Those four were fooled, the highest under Heaven,  
By witchery of women that they used,  
Shorn of the glory that of God was given,  
With high things to mind on them they mused,—  
Be mine with their faults pardoned and excused,—  
But for your girdle give me that again,  
Nor marvel much that I before refused  
And now accept it,—not for the bright green stain,  
Silk-work nor joy of gold, but for to be my bane,

That with this gay-wrought girdle at my side,  
In gorgeous company when I ride forth,  
—Lifted above the world in joy and pride,—  
Seeing this I may reflect ; ‘In death and birth,  
Ay, all life through, how slight is man of worth,  
And to unchastity how ready and weak.’  
Thus in the triumph of joy and sorrow’s dearth,  
I may depress my heart one look to seek  
Of this green girdle. One thing further let me speak :

Your name ? thereafter I demand no more.”  
The other answers, “ Truly as I guess,  
Bernlak Hautdesert am I upon this shore,  
Through might of Morgan, erst Merlin’s mistress,—  
Morgan the fairy, Morgan the goddess,—  
’Tis she that lives within my house hereby,  
In craft deep learn’d and wiles of bookishness  
That clerks of old time writ full cunningly.  
There is no knight on earth so noble nor so high

But she can tame him and his power despise.  
With that wise Merlin who knew well your knights  
She lived of old in passing loving wise,  
And he, in quaintness of his clerkly sleights,  
To keep her love would show her magic-rites,  
And all charms show her to delight her ear.  
She sent me to your high hall of delights  
To bring to her report if truth it were  
The Table’s greatness ; further, hating Guinevere,



The sleights she taught me of that ghostly speaker  
With his cleft neck beside the table and bold,  
In malice, upon Guinevere to wreak her  
Fury, bringing the King with crown of gold  
To this same Chapel to slay ; that tale is told  
For thou, not Arthur undertook this thing.  
The Duchess' daughter of Tintagel old,  
So is she called,—she did my young wife bring  
To trick thee with the love-lace. Uther whom they  
sing,

The poets, Uther got by that same dame  
Arthur that very king and lord is now  
This Britain through. Return then, slough thy shame,  
Come, warrior, to thine aunt,—thou wilt, I trow,  
For my folk love thee, no man more, and thou—”  
But Gawayne answers ; “ Never in no wise.”  
Therefore they part for ever under bough,  
Each kissing each, by snow and steely ice,  
And each commending each to Christ and Paradise.

O'er wild ways of the world rideth Gawayne,  
Grace gotten of his life, with horse and mail,  
Sheltered oft-times, oft camped in open plain,  
Beneath the stars adventuring by vale,  
Whereof if any list to shape the tale,  
There is much matter. Me, I say but this,  
To court he comes at last, a knight all hale,  
And Queen and King there greet him with a kiss,  
And all men wake anew to fellowship in bliss.

They ask him of his travels, all doth he tell,  
 Joys and a many sorrows overpassed,  
 His banqueting, his chance at Green Chapel  
 The lady's love and love-lace at the last,—  
 From his white neck the yellow locks he cast  
 And shows the brand of his untruth for blame,  
 To his fair face the red blood flies and fast,  
 And all his spirits pure sorrow overcame ;  
 "Lo, lord," he cries, "the lace, of my illhap and shame.

I swore to bear this brand of cowardice  
 In all mens' sights, the symbol of my heart.  
 Let no man hide his hurt for truth it is,  
 Who stoops to fault from fault he may not start  
 And deeds ill done time cures nor no man's art."  
 But all those knights a green-wrought baldrick bound  
 Bright on their breasts, to blaze in every part,  
 Whereso i' th' world they voyaged over ground,  
 The token of the honour of the Table-Round,

Even all King Arthur's knights by south and north,  
 A sign of highest honour ever more,  
 As in the Brutus Books it is set forth,  
 (Cited in tale my witnesses before,  
 That he was honoured that the green lace bore,)  
 Sith Brutus with a new-awakening joy,  
 Held on toward these white cliffs and rocky shore  
 O'er the wide waters' turbulent annoy,  
 When siege and shock of battle broke the antique Troy.

I-wis,  
 Adventures many enow  
 Have fallen before ere this :  
 But He with the Thorn on Brow,  
 May He bring all to Bliss. Amen.

HONY SOYT QUI MAL PENCE.

## NOTES.



## NOTES.

*Second Personal Pronoun.* Old English used the singular only in addressing one person, but in the Middle English of the fourteenth century, *ye* was also used, but in different circumstances. Skeat thus summarises: "*Thou* is the language of a lord to a servant, of an equal to an equal, and expresses also companionship, love, permission, defiance, scorn, and threatening . . . . *Ye* is the language of a servant to a lord, and of compliment, and further expresses honour, submission, entreaty." Jespersen says: "The distinction between the two forms of addressing one person corresponds pretty nearly to that of the French *tu* and *vous*, but it was looser, as very frequently one person addressed the same other person now with *thou*, now with *you* (*ye*), according as the tone of the conversation changed ever so slightly." The use of the second form of address in "*Gawayne*" is very subtle and interesting, and adds much to the dramatic force of many passages; the mixed use should be studied with especial care; the translator has reproduced exactly the use of the original.

PAGE 33. Stanza 2. "Ere yet the Christmas holly was haled down . . ." I have here followed the popular reading of this line, against which however, two serious objections may be urged. The first is that the verb is not singular but plural ("were," not "was"). The second is that holly is elsewhere in this poem spelt "*holyn*,"—it is with a "*holyn bobbe*" (holly bush) that the Green Knight enters Arthur's hall. It is probable

therefore that the line of the original :—"Er þe halidayez holly were halet out of toun," is to be literally rendered :—"Ere the holidays wholly were gone out of town." Compare the well-known line of the old song : "Lenten ys come with love to toun."

PAGE 34. Stanza 1. "Part the fourth day but till the fourth day tarry." The "Quyle forth dayez" of the original means literally, not "till the fourth day," but "till late in the day." However as we learn from the text that it is on the fourth day that Gawayne is departing, the expansion is legitimate.

PAGE 41. Stanza 1. "Folly is all men give me . . ." A passage of great ambiguity. The following, founded upon the late Professor Napier's rendering, gives I believe, as exactly as the change of language will permit, the meaning of the original ; ". . . for I have found, in good faith, your courtesy noble, and other men receive fame for their deeds, full much, from other people, but as to the great matter they make of my deserts, they are foolish ; it is your noble nature that knoweth naught but good."—Gawayne tells the lady that her generosity leads her to believe him a nobler man than he is.

PAGE 51. Stanza 2. This account of the unlacing of the boar which might prove distasteful to modern readers, I have ventured to condense into one stanza. The four lines there omitted I here append for the sake of completeness. Literally the passage runs : "After (the having off of the head) he breaks out the bowels, broils them on the ashes, and rewards his hounds with bread blent there-

with. Then he breaks out the brawn in bright, broad, shields and, as fitly beseems, has the haslets out ; and yet fastens them all whole, the halves together."

PAGE 55. Stanza 1. "By hollow, by hill, he leads them, over, under . . ." I have translated this line as it is punctuated in the "Early English Text Society's edition of "Sir Gawayne." But for a probable reading see the "Modern Language Review" for April, 1913, where Mr. Brett advocates "midoverundern," that is the fox eludes the hunting-party until about ten-thirty A.M. if we suppose "undern" to have here it's usual and earlier meaning of nine in the morning.

PAGE 73. Stanza 2. The New English Dictionary translates the much debated words "spenne fote" as "with feet close together."







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